



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

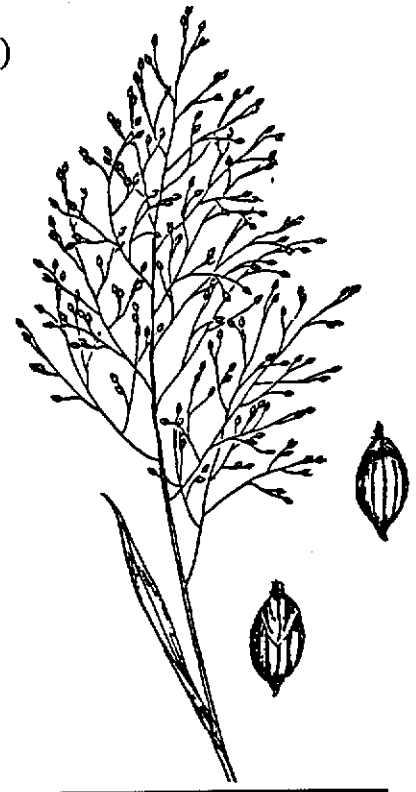
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135
Westborough, MA 01581
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MASSACHUSETTS PLANTS OF SPECIAL CONCERN

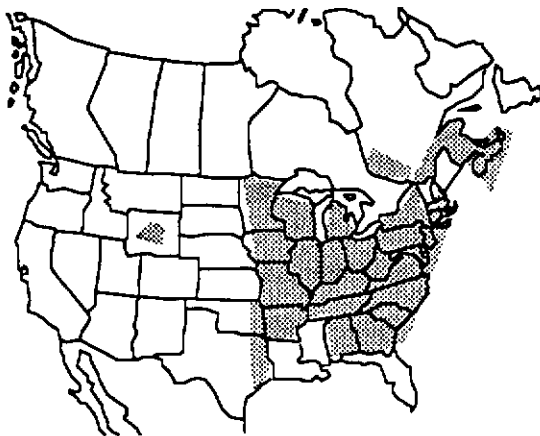
PHILADELPHIA PANIC-GRASS
(*Panicum philadelphicum* Bernh. ex Trin.)

Description

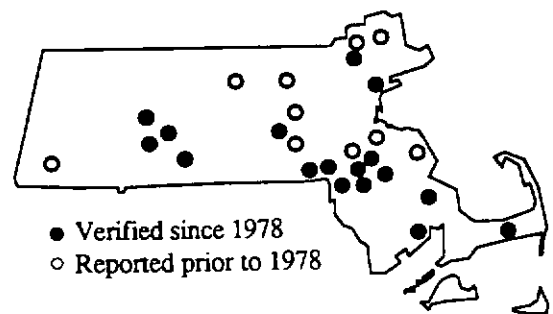
Philadelphia Panic-grass is a slender, yellowish-green annual in the Grass family (Poaceae or Gramineae). Woodland Witchgrass is another of its common names. Its 1-5 dm ($1/3$ - $1\frac{2}{3}$ ft.) high stems rise from a cluster of fibrous roots. These stems, or culms, branch, are usually erect and follow a more or less zig-zag pattern at their bases (the direction of the stem shifts slightly at each node). The leaf blades are 3-8 mm ($3/25$ - $8/25$ in.) wide, 5-15 cm (2 - 6 in.) long, and sparsely covered with stiff hairs. The 10-20 cm (4 - 8 in.) long inflorescence is born on a stalk that extends well above the terminal leaf sheath. This panicle--or inflorescence with a main axis and subdivided branches--has few flowers, most of which occur in pairs at the ends of the branchlets. Some of the



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.



Documented Range of Philadelphia
Panic-grass



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

swellings at the bases of the panicle branches may have stiff hairs. The spikelets (basic units of the inflorescence in grasses) are 1.6-2.4 mm (3/50 - 4/50 in.) long. The first of the glumes (lowermost floral bracts in the Grass family) is approximately 2/5 as long as the second. The plant's plump fruits are roughly one-half as long as wide and will turn black as they ripen. Philadelphia Panic-grass forms mature spikelets from early August to early September.

Range

The documented range of Philadelphia Panic-grass extends from Nova Scotia, southwestern Quebec, and Minnesota, south to Georgia and eastern Texas. Populations also occur in Wyoming.

Similar Species

Witchgrass (*Panicum capillare*) could be mistaken for Philadelphia Panic-grass. However, Witchgrass has a densely flowered panicle that may be one-half the length of the plant. Furthermore, its fruits are straw-colored.

Habitat in Massachusetts

Philadelphia Panic-grass is a plant of dry or sandy open ground or of open, moist ground bordering lakes and streams. In Massachusetts, habitats include shores of shallow coastal plain ponds; a small depression in a developed woods; shores of kettlehole ponds with muddy-peaty substrates; an exposed, sandy-cobbly shore of a reservoir pond; and a shallow, annually flooded depression. Associated species include Bentgrass (*Agrostis scabra*), Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), Golden Hedge-hyssop (*Gratiola aurea*), Lance-leaved Violet (*Viola lanceolata*), Fall Panicum (*Panicum dichotomiflorum*), Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia terrestris*), and various spike-rushes (*Eleocharis* spp.). Some of the rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with Philadelphia Panic-grass include Wright's Panic-grass (*Dicanthelium wrightianum*), Intermediate Spike-sedge (*Eleocharis intermedia*) and Toothcup (*Rotala ramosior*).

Population Status

Philadelphia Panic-grass is presently listed as a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. This means that, although the plant is not currently endangered or threatened, it is rare, and it may become threatened in the state due to an ongoing decline in the species, small numbers of the plants, or limited habitat. There are 18 current stations (discovered or relocated since 1978) in 17 towns and 11 historical stations (unverified since 1978) in 10 towns in the Commonwealth. Philadelphia Panic-grass is also considered rare in Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio and Rhode Island. It was present historically in Delaware and Vermont.